



**Written Testimony of the Children's Environmental Health Center of the Mount Sinai School of Medicine Before the Connecticut General Assembly Committee on Public Health, March 7, 2012**

Testimony in Support of:  
SB 274, AN ACT CONCERNING CHEMICALS OF  
HIGH CONCERN TO CHILDREN

Dear Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter, and honorable members of the Committee on Public Health:

As pediatricians, researchers and scientists at the Children's Environmental Health Center of the Mount Sinai School of Medicine, a designated World Health Organization Collaborating Centre in Children's Environmental Health, we strongly support Senate Bill 274, An Act Concerning Chemicals of High Concern to Children. This legislation represents the beginning of a genuine effort to decrease the exposure of vulnerable populations of infants, children, and adolescents to toxic chemicals, and is a major step forward with respect to chemical reform in Connecticut.

Despite our best efforts to protect our children, there have been repeated episodes in recent years in which children have been exposed to toxic chemicals. For example, there was a death several years ago of a child who swallowed a lead-containing metal charm. Children have been placed at risk of exposure to cadmium in toys, arsenic in CCA-treated wood play sets, and mercury in sneakers. Clearly, the current regulatory regime is not working.

Parental concern about children's safety is well-founded; the developing bodies and brains of children and fetuses are uniquely vulnerable to the toxic effects of chemicals. Children

often bear the brunt of the negative health consequences of chemicals in our environment. While previous legislation has centered on the regulation of specific toxins, there are hundreds of chemicals that are widely distributed in children's products yet have not undergone basic safety testing. The questionable safety of products and the chemicals they contain can leave parents feeling frustrated and overwhelmed regarding the consumer choices they face. Indeed, as environmental pediatricians, the single most common question we get from parents seeking help is, "Is this product safe for my child?" The burden of determining which products and chemicals are safe and which are potentially dangerous cannot rest on the consumer alone.

Legislation addressing the safety of children's products prior to placing them on the market for mass distribution is critical. The systematic identification of potentially toxic chemicals present in consumer products is an important step forward in this process, and in protecting the health of our children.

Senate Bill 274 provides a plan for comprehensive identification and consideration of potentially harmful chemicals in children's products. At least 12 other states are considering similar legislation this year, and another four – Maine, Minnesota, Washington and California – have passed more comprehensive legislation regulating labeling and marketing of products containing the identified priority chemicals. Parents in Connecticut and throughout the country are demanding chemical reform.

The proposed bill represents a major step forward in protecting the health of some of our most vulnerable citizens. We are especially pleased to see the inclusion of the following points:

- (a) Consideration of chemicals of concern for fetuses; unborn children are particularly vulnerable to toxic exposures. Products marketed to women of childbearing age and expectant mothers need to be free of toxins to ensure the health of the fetus.
- (b) A broad definition of priority chemicals that includes endocrine disruptors, carcinogens, and bioaccumulative chemicals, many of which have already been identified by other states and agencies as part of the enactment of chemical reform legislation.
- (c) Involvement of a panel with diverse expertise relevant to the field of children's environmental health to assist in the identification of chemicals of high concern.

Some have argued that enforcement of SB 274 will cost money. But consider the costs of failing to regulate the content of toys to protect children against toxic chemicals. A recent article in the widely read, fully peer reviewed journal *Health Affairs* reported that poisoning of American children by just one chemical – lead- costs this country **\$50.9 billion** each year. Lead paint is the major source of this lead poisoning. The major source of the economic costs associated with lead poisoning is loss of IQ and diminution of economic productivity that is caused by lead-induced injury to the brains of young American children. Such preventable brain damage is not only morally wrong. It is also very costly in terms of economics and also in terms of its' negative impact on America's future productivity and leadership.

In summary, Senate Bill 274 sends a clear message to Connecticut that children's health is a top priority. It addresses parental concerns about the safety of their children and offers the hope of wider protections. We reiterate our strong support for this bill and for the movement toward chemical reform in Connecticut.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony at this important hearing. We would be more than happy to answer any questions that may arise.

Sincerely,

Lauren Marcewicz, MD  
Department of Pediatrics

Maida P. Galvez, MD, MPH  
Associate Professor, Department of Preventive Medicine and Pediatrics  
Mount Sinai School of Medicine

Philip J. Landrigan, MD, MSc  
Dean for Global Health  
Ethel H. Wise Professor and Chairman, Department of Preventive Medicine  
Professor of Pediatrics  
Director, Children's Environmental Health Center

Mount Sinai School of Medicine  
17 East 102nd Street, Room D3-145  
New York, NY 10029-6574